

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

Public Relations / 11150 East Blvd. / Cleveland, Ohio 44106 / 216 421-7340

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FOR RELEASE ON RECEIPT

CLAUDE MONET'S MONUMENTAL TRIPTYCH, WATER LILIES, ON VIEW BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 18

Water Lilies, a mural-sized oil painting by Claude Monet (1840-1926), acquired by The Cleveland Museum of Art in 1960, was originally part of a monumental triptych executed by the impressionist master in the last decade of his life. From September 18, 1979, through February 17, 1980, the Cleveland Museum painting will be displayed in the Museum's upper level exhibition gallery with the two other panels from the work, one on loan from the St. Louis Art Museum, the other from the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri.

The panels which make up the triptych, each painted on fine linen canvas and measuring approximately 6-1/2 feet high by 14 feet long, were found in the artist's studio after his death and sold in the late 1950s as independent works of art. It was first discovered that the paintings formed a triptych when they were being considered for inclusion in an exhibition of Monet's late works at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1978. They were displayed together for the first time in this exhibition, entitled Monet's Years at Giverny: Beyond Impressionism. When this exhibition closed, arrangements were made for the triptych to be installed for a period of time in each of the museums owning a panel of the work.

The triptych is just one of many paintings by Monet of a lily pond which he had created on his property at Giverny, a village on the Seine northwest of Paris. During the last decades of his life, the artist was almost completely absorbed in painting different views of this pond.

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In the earlier smaller works, done between 1902 and 1908, the pond is depicted in a somewhat conventional manner. The clumps of lilies receding toward the distant banks of the pond, and the reflections of sky and trees on the surface of the water give the viewer a clear sense of space and distance. In the late paintings, such as the triptych, the artist works much closer to his subject. The horizon is eliminated, forms and space are not so clearly defined, and the viewer is invited to look into the depths of the pond, to observe the pattern of light beneath the lilies and the reflections.

The large-scale paintings were begun in 1916 when Monet decided to carry out a long-cherished idea--to transform his paintings of the lily pond into a single decorative scheme which would run continuously around a room. In the course of this project, Monet produced many immense canvases, some single panels, others diptychs or triptychs. In 1922 he agreed to donate a cycle of these paintings to France as a peace memorial; and shortly after his death, nineteen of the panels were installed as he had wished in the Orangerie of the Tuileries in Paris. Of the many versions of the lily pond remaining in his studio, the triptych on exhibit is one of the finest.

Through November, three earlier paintings by Monet in the Museum's collection will be exhibited with the triptych: The Wheat Field of 1881, Low Tide at Pourville near Dieppe, dated 1882, and Antibes, painted in 1888. The triptych will not be on view during the first part of December while a special loan exhibition from Paris of recently unearthed ^{*first two weeks*} medieval sculpture from Notre-Dame Cathedral is installed in the upper level exhibition gallery. When this exhibition opens on December 15, 1979, the triptych, which is installed in the same gallery, will be on view once more.

Gallery talks on Monet's Water Lilies will be given on Wednesday, September 19, and Sunday, September 23, at 1:30 pm.

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3-monet's water lilies

Also offered are a series of slide-illustrated lectures on the art of Claude Monet by Marianne Doezema, instructor in the Museum's Department of Art History and Education. On Wednesday, September 19, at 2 pm she will speak on Monet Beyond Impressionism. Her lecture on Wednesday, September 25, at 2 pm, entitled Monet at Giverny, covers the period during which Monet painted the Water Lily series.

Gallery talks also Dec 12 & 16.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact Ann Edwards, Public Relations, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.